

MEETING SUMMARY

North Carolina National Park, Parkway and Forests Development Council

January 9, 2009

1:00 PM –3:00 PM

***NCDENR Western Regional Office
Swannanoa, NC***

Council Members in Attendance: Steve Legeay, Maxine Dalton, Claude Douthit, Tom Massie, Myrna Campbell, Patsy Lovedahl

Others in Attendance: Mary Noel / USFS, Tom Jackson / State Parks, Phil Francis / Blue Ridge Parkway, Bob Miller / Great Smoky Mountain National Park, Judy Francis / NCDENR Office of Conservation & Community Affairs, Greg Yates / NC Division of Forest Resources

- I. Call to Order - Steve Legeay called the meeting to order at 1:05 PM.
- II. Welcome and Introductions – Steve Legeay welcomed all in attendance and each person introduced themselves and announced the agency or entity they were there to represent.
- III. Approval of Summary from October 31, 2008 Meeting – Steve Legeay asked the council members to review the summary. One spelling correction (Shuler) was requested. Maxine Dalton made a motion to accept the summary with the noted correction. Myrna Campbell provided the 2nd and the summary was unanimously approved.
- IV. Election of Council Officers – Steve Legeay said he was at the end of his term in July, 2009 and that he did not plan to serve another term. He said that Maxine Dalton and Eric Jenkins had volunteered to serve as Chair and Vice-Chair. Myrna Campbell nominated Maxine for chair, a 2nd by Patsy Lovedahl. Maxine Dalton nominated Eric Jenkins as Vice Chair, 2nd from Myrna Campbell. The nominees were unanimously approved by the Council.

Claude Douthit also said that Tom Massie, the Council's only Ex Officio member should be voted on to renew his membership for another term. Steve Legeay made a motion that Tom Massie be an Ex Officio member for another term, Patsy Lovedahl provided a 2nd, which was unanimously approved by the Council. Steve then turned over chairmanship of the meeting to the newly-elected Maxine Dalton.
- V. Comments from the new Council Chair – Maxine Dalton then gave thanks to Steve Legeay for his past efforts and leadership of the Council. Judy Francis explained there was a mix up with the "thank you" letter from Governor Easley – and said the council would frame the letter. Maxine then told the council that she would be sending e-mail request for feedback from council members and agencies to identify new tasks and

ways to use information. She emphasized the need for council members to do outreach with local policymakers.

VI. Agency Updates

Mary Noel / USFS – Mary briefly described the ongoing ecological restoration meetings and provided an activity handout which described the following : Chatooga River decision will be out in February. The Upper Tellico decision is still being worked on and data collection is ongoing but should be out by early February. Land & Water conservation funds, if available, will be targeted to a parcel on the Uhwarrie and the Catawba Falls tract. If any money becomes available through economic stimulus legislation, we're putting a list of projects together from recreation improvements, etc. The Environmental Assessment decision re: invasive species control will be out in the next few weeks. Marisue Hilliard said the council could do a letter of support for the economic stimulus projects.

Greg Yates / DFR – Handout re: fires in WNC and information about causes and trends. We are getting rain now, but the long term trend is to dry out again in the Spring. Vast majority of fires started by humans – most often by debris fires. He also mentioned potential connections to global climate change. He explained that the staff is specific to each county and most counties have only one person – and they should have at least two.

Tom Jackson / State Parks – Appreciate partnership with DFR re: fire management in state parks. Budget reductions in operations and seasonal workers. Closing buildings in western region to reduce energy costs – they will reopen in April. 40 vacant positions frozen. Grandfather Mtn. SP – Council of State approved purchase last week – Legislature should approve in March. Crowders Mtn. State Park trail connection to Kings Mtn. battlefield should be open soon. Perhaps the council could help with public outreach for the Chimney Rock SP improvements and management plans. Mt. Michell SP management plan underway. New tower is smaller (its only 12') but handicap-accessible. Gorges SP Phase I construction underway includes roads – paving being completed this Spring weather permitting.

Phil Francis / Blue Ridge Parkway – April 1st – one-lane open - both lanes by mid-May. Budget – 75 vacant positions now. Economic stimulus package information of potential projects was sent to DC – we don't know who is reading it but we hope someone is. Some contact stations could be closed this year if we don't have the money to staff them. 75th anniversary coming up and partners have raised money from donors and grant for anniversary-related events and improvements. Engage communities, sustainability, stewardship themes. Cooperative weed management team with USFS to address invasive plants. General Management Plan update still underway.

Bob Miller – Handout. Great Smoky Mtn. Sent list of stimulus projects in the park for consideration. 75th anniversary activities, governor's proclamation event on April 24, 2009. June 15 – Oconaluftee visitor center opening event and activities. Rededication of park on September 2nd at Newfound Gap – president will be invited. Visitation numbers are down about 4% through November, 2008. Camping is down about 12% - which is

starting to cost us money. Claude said Deep Creek is down this year. North Shore Road activities – Superintendent is still trying to get another meeting scheduled re: the settlement amount. The current administration was not as responsive. Claude said that the park staff should have moved faster. Bob Miller said the staff was trying to get a response, but the staff in DC did not move as fast as they would have liked. Tom Massie made some comments about making sure the new DENR Secretary was aware of the Council and the issues, including the North Shore Road, get attention.

Tom Massie – CWMTF - \$100 million dollars invested in clean water projects. Lots of land purchased – much through NCWRC. Buffers around DSF., Pond Mountain, South Mountain SP, and other projects with land trust partners. Some parcels are adjacent to or in viewshed of BRP.

Judy Francis – NCDENR / One NC Naturally – Map updates, transition issues.

Maxine - Letters of support for infrastructure improvements – via e-mail.

Meetings - 1st Friday every other month. March 6 is next meeting.

Tom – Consider letter of endorsement for funding for the four trust funds. They have been a huge benefit in WNC and need to be continued even in tough economic times. A letter to each rep and senator from WNC. Judy and Tom will prepare letter for Maxine's signature and get it out ASAP.

VIII. Set Dates for 2009 Meetings

VII. Adjourn – 2:45.